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CTCC FOR JAMES VAN DE VELDE

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TAGS: [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [IT](#)  
SUBJECT: IDENTIFYING CREDIBLE VOICES: MISSION ITALY RESPONSE

REF: A. SECSTATE 122288  
[1](#)B. SECSTATE 137091

Classified By: Charge Anna Borg, for reason 1.4 (c)

[1](#)1. (U) This cable is Mission Italy's response to reftels.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Embassy Rome is providing these carefully vetted names -- individuals who are already well known and who have taken public stands in favor of moderation or against extremism. The individuals named below are well-known pro-western voices without known links to, or known resonance with, Muslim extremists. They have resonance among moderate Muslims and the non-Muslim Italian mainstream. We trust there will be no use of them in such a way as to discredit their independence. That would only put them in jeopardy and erode their effectiveness as "alternative voices."

[1](#)3. (SBU) Mission Italy's Muslim Outreach program is very active. The entire Mission is engaged, including all three consulates, under the overall coordination of the Ambassador and the PD team. In recent weeks we have been meeting with an even broader number of Mission elements seeking new means to approach the Muslim community. In an effort to empower moderate Muslim voices, we intend to cosponsor a series of communication and media training workshops with select community leaders; continue to send top Muslim journalists on the Edward R. Murrow program; and participate in the Citizen Dialogue program. In addition, we want to augment our efforts in the Partnership for Growth (P4G) program to identify obstacles to small business creation and legitimate employment in the Muslim community and to seek means to overcome them.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Yahya Sergio Pallavicini

[1](#)A. Influence: An Italian noble who converted to Islam, Yahya Sergio Pallavicini is one of the leading representatives of the Muslim community in Italy at both the local and national level. Through training courses organized by the Lombardy region, through cultural activities and publications (he recently authored a volume on "Islam in Europe" with an Italian publishing company) and through a project under discussion, shared with France, Spain, Belgium and Italy, that will impose professional training for future Imams before they practice, Pallavicini plays an important role in how the future Islamic presence in Italy will evolve. Pallavicini's authority with local Muslim communities has recently grown in importance. His official pilgrimage in 1998 with the Italian Muslim delegation to Mecca and his very recent visit to Brussels as a member of the First World Congress of 100 Imams and 100 Rabbis for Peace (sponsored by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) are testimony to his important role.

B. Bio: Pallavicini is a member of the National Commission for Intercultural Education created by the Italian Ministry for Education, a member of ISESCO (the Islamic Organization for Education, Science and Culture) and a member of EIC (the European Islamic Conference), the first Islamic NGO accredited by the European Union, for which he handles relations with the Vatican and with other foreign countries. Pallavicini's professional aspirations point to a consolidated role in this direction, as official interlocutor with the Italian Government for the Islamic community.

Pallavicini is currently Vice President of COREIS, (Religious Islamic Community) one of the five major groups representing Muslims in Northern Italy. COREIS, which counts about 4,000/5,000 members countrywide (many Italian converts), concentrates its activity in Northern Italy (Lombardy, Liguria and Piedmont) and is therefore a strategic contact for Post's outreach activity towards Muslim audiences.

C. Geographic Region: Italy, EU, U.S., Israel

D. Audience: An ardent promoter of reciprocal knowledge and dialogue among the three monotheistic religions, Pallavicini's activity is constantly focused on furthering correct knowledge of Islamic faith and culture within a transparent institutional framework. Yahya Pallavicini holds several high-profile institutional appointments that bespeak his influential role not only with his Muslim brothers, but also as a Muslim interlocutor for several Italian public institutions impacting on audiences of primary importance to us: Muslim youth and the leaders of other religious faiths.

E. Forums: Pallavicini's empowered public role through

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enhanced media visibility, which gained him the attention of a large portion of the Italian public and of a broad spectrum of Italian politicians, makes him a particularly important voice, especially given his moderate approach to such sensitive issues. We believe that in the coming years he will also become a point of reference for the local moderate community, owing to his personal involvement in the construction of Milan's first Mosque. (The site is constructed on soil owned by COREIS, and the space is due to be completed by 2007.)

F. No derogatory information.

5. (SBU) Allam Khaled Fouad

A. Influence: Allam Khaled Fouad was elected to the Chamber of Deputies (Italy's lower house of Parliament) with the Daisy Party in April 2006 and sits in the Chamber's Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Allam is an editorialist and columnist on Islam, migration and Arab world issues for left-leaning, influential daily La Repubblica since 2003 and previously wrote for centrist, influential daily La Stampa.

He has been teaching sociology of the Muslim world at the University of Trieste since 1994, is a professor of Islamic studies at the University of Urbino, and also teaches a course at Stanford University Florence Campus on the sociological aspects of Islamic immigration to Italy and to Europe, the challenges of integration, and the notion of Islamic identity abroad.

He was called by the European Union to serve as an expert on issues connected to Islam and immigration, and by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on issues connected to the relationship between nationality and religious identity.

He is a member of the editorial committee of MARS ) Le Monde Arabe dans la Recherche Scientifique, a review published by

the Arab World Institute of Paris and a prolific writer of books and essays, including Letter to a Kamikaze (2004) and Global Islam (2002). He co-founded and directed from 1989 to 1993 a collection of Arab-Islamic studies, the Biblioteca araba e islamica, published by Marietti in Genoa.

Since 1999, Allam has served as a consultant for Italy's national radio and television network RAI. He is a cultural adviser for the Turin Book Fair and, since 2001, an adviser for the Province of Turin for Mediterranean programs. He has cooperated with the Institut Maghreb-Europe of the University of Paris, presented a report on the public management of Islam in Italy to the Chamber of Deputies Constitutional Affairs Committee in 2001, and was an expert adviser of the Italian Ministry of Agricultural Policies for relations with the Arab world from 2000 to 2001.

B. Bio: Allam was born on September 2, 1955 in Tlemcen, Algeria, near the Tunisian border of a Syrian mother and a Moroccan father. He studied law and political sociology in Algeria and France. He is married and is Muslim.

A resident of Italy since 1982 and a naturalized Italian since 1990, he was elected with the Greens to the European Parliament in 1999, where he sat until the next elections in 2004 as co-president of the Greens Group (ALE). In Italy, he was a member of the Green Party's National Executive.

C. Geographic region: Italy and EU

D. Audience: Italian mainstream and moderate Muslim community, especially youth given his role as a professor.

E. Forums: Media, university, parliament

F. No known derogatory information.

6. (SBU) Magdi Allam

A. Influence: Magdi Allam is the best known writer on Islam in Italy. He calls himself a non-practicing Muslim. He is respected for his probity and intellectual honesty, and fearlessness in exposing contradictions in the Italian leftist mainstream, or in the Muslim world. He is a principal participant in the Italian debate on the relationship between the West and Islam. Since 9/11 he has always been a supporter of the Western coalition in the war on terrorism and achieved greater prominence with major investigative feature stories

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on terrorist cells in Italy and their international connections. Recently he has embraced a fuller neo-conservative agenda in close association with former Senate Speaker Marcello Pera and others. He is an effective interlocutor for the Italian mainstream catholic population and is a useful voice to dispel myths about the Muslim religion in the Italian mainstream. He has lost much credibility among the muslim population who question his "Muslim" credentials and criticize him for having been co-opted by the establishment.

B. BIO: Allam, 55, was born in Cairo and attended Coptic primary and secondary school there. He moved to Italy at the age of 19 and attended the University of Rome, where he received a degree in sociology. He has held Italian citizenship since 1987. He became emeritus deputy managing editor of Corriere della Sera in Summer 2003. Before this assignment, he was Middle East bureau chief and special correspondent for La Repubblica, Italy's left-leaning major national daily. Like many journalists, he began his career at Communist daily Il Manifesto. He has lived with a police escort for several years. Beside his columns in Corriere della Sera, he often participates in TV talk shows and is a very prolific writer. Recently, he wrote: "Islam - Italy: Who Are the Muslims Living Among Us and What Do They Think" - June 2000; "Diary From Islam" -

January 2001; "Bin Laden In Italy, Journey into Radical Islam" - October 2002; "Saddam: Secret History of A Dictator" - February 2003; "Kamikaze made in Europe" -2004; "Winning Fear" - 2005; "I Love Italy. Do Italians Love Her?" - 2006; "Long Live Israel" - 2007, a current Italian bestseller. In 2007 we believe he received an award from the U.S. Anti Defamation League in Washington. On July 4th, 2007, Magdi Allam led a rally in Rome to demand an end to the persecution of Christians in the Middle East that has forced thousands to flee the region. He speaks little English.

¶C. Geographic Region: He is very well known across Italy. He is not very well known among Muslims outside Italy. His positions are strongly critical of Islamic extremism. For example, he was the first writer to denounce links between Italian mosques and terrorism. This has made him the target of groups such as UCOII. Some see him as the model moderate Muslim, fully integrated into Italian culture and values. Others, including some fellow moderate Muslims, see him as too provocative.

¶D. Audience: Magdi Allam is influential among the Italian mainstream, young people, with political and intellectual elites, especially center-right political circles and with some moderate representatives of the Muslim community.

¶E. Forums: Beside his columns in top circulation Corriere della Sera (circ. 686,000), and his books, Magdi Allam often appears on TV talk shows and public debates organized by think tanks on Muslim-related issues.

¶F. No derogatory information.  
BORG